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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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We saw opening day at Fenway Park earlier in the week. The cherry blossoms bloomed in Washington, D.C. So what’s with the temperatures in the 30’s and sleet and snow hitting the area?? C’mon, it’s almost mid-April and we should be enjoying the warmth and sunshine attributable to this time on the calendar! So much for Spring...

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Electronic Arts Cuts Staff at Montreal Studio
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Alienware X51 Gaming System Now Available!
And more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Electronic Arts Cuts Staff at Montreal Studio

Videogame publisher Electronic Arts has begun laying off staff at its Montreal game studio in its latest round of jobs cuts, less than a month after former Chief Executive John Riccitiello abruptly resigned.

The company, known for its "FIFA" and "Sims" games, declined to divulge the number of jobs affected, or how many employees it has in Montreal, where it has developed console games like "Army of Two".

"EA is sharpening its focus to provide games for new platforms and mobile.

In some cases, this involves reducing team sizes as we evolve into a more efficient organization," the Redwood City, California-based company said in a statement.

The Montreal studio, which includes a team that makes mobile games, is not closing, a spokesman said. He declined to say which teams within the studio had been affected by the job cuts.

The layoffs come shortly after John Riccitiello stepped down as CEO on March 30, after taking responsibility for missed operational targets.

Former CEO and Chairman Larry Probst has been appointed executive chairman as the company begins its search for the next CEO.

EA and rivals like Activision Blizzard Inc have seen growth fall off sharply as more gamers flock to free games on social networks or on mobile devices. The biggest traditional games publishers have tried to buy startups, reorganize existing studios and invest in mobile platforms but face intense competition from entrenched players like Rovio or Zynga Inc.

EA has been reorganizing studios to embrace new game platforms and adapt to consumer behavior. Last year, EA’s PopCap unit, which makes social and mobile games, laid off 50 of about 380 staff members in its Seattle and Vancouver studios to focus on free-to-play social and mobile games.

The game publisher is also preparing to adopt the next-generation video game console technology in its games. Consumers are holding back from buying hardware and software as they wait for next-generation versions of Sony Corp’s PlayStation and Microsoft Corp’s Xbox, expected later this year.

Disney Kills Star Wars 1313, Lays Off LucasArts Staff

That noise you just heard was the other shoe dropping: Lucasfilm said today that it will cease internal game development at LucasArts, following the company s acquisition by Disney in November.

After evaluating our position in the games market, we ve decided to shift LucasArts from an internal development to a licensing model, minimizing the company s risk while achieving a broader portfolio of quality Star Wars games, read a statement issued by Lucasfilm. As a result of this change, we ve had layoffs across the organization.

Reached for comment by Wired, a representative said that internal development on announced games, like the next-gen shooter Star Wars 1313, had been ceased but that the company was evaluating its options as regards having those games completed by an outside developer. However, Kotaku quoted an anonymous source inside the company that said such options had already been explored, and Disney found no takers. So it s looking quite unlikely that 1313 will ever come out.

Even though Disney said at the time of its $4 billion acquisition of the Star Wars company that it would focus more on social and mobile than on console, a Lucasfilm representative did say to Wired that future Star Wars console games were not off the table.

It s hard to be surprised at this turn of events when Disney spelled it

all out at the time of the acquisition. It s moving away from internally-developed console games, having shut down Warren Spector s studio Junction Point following the release of Epic Mickey 2, and towards social and mobile. There will still be Disney and Star Wars console titles, but these will be produced by external developers. Lucasfilm has been trying to turn the struggling LucasArts division around for many years now, with a musical-chairs game of ever-changing creative leads and executives.

I can see why Lucas, as a standalone company, would want to fix its games division. But Disney has no such need. It has a games division already, it doesn t need to try to fix LucasArts problems. It s sad when hundreds of people lose their jobs, but organizations that are no longer competitive need to die to make room for ones that are. If it s Star Wars games you re after, there s no reason an external developer can t handle them.

And if you re nostalgic for the great old Lucas games of old, like Monkey Island and Maniac Mansion, this is good news for you. First of all, the people who made those games are already working at Telltale or Double Fine making exactly what you wish Lucas was still making. If you want a new Grim Fandango, a shift to a licensing-only model makes it more likely that Disney will look to cash in on that latent demand.

Again, if you re in that latter group, the LucasArts you re so nostalgic for died a long, long time ago when the company cancelled its Sam & Max sequel and laid off the whole team. And then that team formed Telltale Games and eventually made The Walking Dead. The LucasArts that died today is not the one you loved, and it was never going to be again.

Xbox 720 and PlayStation 4 Secrets Allegedly Leaked to Nvidia by Former AMD Executives

Over the last year, AMD executives have been abandoning ship for rival Nvidia, and according to a new lawsuit, they took confidential information about the Xbox 720 and PlayStation 4 with them. Engadget reports that AMD has filed suit against four ex-employees, claiming that the executives absconded with thousands of confidential documents, including sensitive information about technologies at use in next-gen consoles. As our well-placed sources told us last year, custom silicon based on AMD’s A8-series APU and HD 7670 GPU will be used in the PlayStation 4, while the Xbox 720 will combine an IBM PowerPC CPU and a custom version of AMD’s 6670 GPU.

The lawsuit targets the former VP of AMD’s Strategic Division, Robert Feldstein, who played a key role in developing custom hardware for game consoles like the Xbox 360, Wii, and Wii U. AMD claims that he and others transfered 100,000 files that contain trade secrets related to development, based on "forensically-recovered data" that indicates the executive used external storage devices on his company computer before his departure. What’s more, Feldstein and Richard Hagen, another AMD executive, lured two other employees to Nvidia.

With Nvidia seemingly edged out of the upcoming console generation, Feldstein could be the key to regaining a role in future console hardware. Whether or not he has or will use proprietary data stolen from AMD to help achieve that goal remains to be seen.

Alienware X51 Gaming System Now Available With Ubuntu

The Dell owned Alienware brand of gaming systems has announced a new option available for their Alienware X51 gaming systems, which allows you to drop Windows 8 and have Ubuntu installed instead.

Windows 8 is not the ideal operating system if you would like to use Alienware X51 in your living rooms as Windows 8 still requires a non game controller interface peripherals.

However Ubuntu offers a stylish, intuitive interface provides a clean and streamlined experience that is easy to use with a games controller, and works with music, videos, photos and files that you use on your current PC.

Alienware explains a little more about the reasons why they have included the option on their Alienware X51 computer system:

Users can instantly access Ubuntu s Software Center and select from thousands of free applications. You can pick the apps you want so you won t have anything on your computer you don t need. Each application includes user reviews and ratings to help you decide which apps you want to install. With Ubuntu One as your personal cloud service, you get 5GB of free storage and you can access your files on all your devices instantly.

Now you can enjoy the next level of the ultimate gaming experience in your living room. With Big Picture, Steam has been reformatted for use with your TV and game controller which allows you to play your Steam games from the comfort of your couch. You can access your entire library of Steam games or browse the Steam catalog for the latest releases and top sellers. By connecting your PC to your TV, setup is quick and easy.

For more information on the new Alienware X51 Ubuntu system jump over to the Alienware website for details.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

LulzSec Hacker Pleads Guilty to Cyberattacks

A British computer hacker affiliated to the group Lulz Security pleaded guilty Tuesday to cyberattacks on institutions including Sony, Britain’s National Health Service and Rupert Murdoch’s News International.

Ryan Ackroyd admitted one count of carrying out an unauthorized act to impair the operation of a computer.

Prosecutors say the 26-year-old accessed websites belonging to Sony, 20th Century Fox, the NHS, Nintendo, the Arizona State Police and News International between February and September 2011.

He will be sentenced May 14 at Southwark Crown Court in London. Other charges against him are being dropped.

Three other British hackers 18-year-old Mustafa Al-Bassam, 20-year-old Jake Davis and Ryan Cleary, 21 had previously pleaded guilty to launching distributed denial of service attacks on organizations including the CIA and Britain’s Serious Organized Crime Agency. Denial of service attacks work by overwhelming sites with traffic.

Prosecutors say Cleary’s targets also included U.S. Air Force computers at the Pentagon.

LulzSec, whose name draws on Internet-speak for "laugh out loud," shot to prominence in mid-2011 with an eye-catching attack on U.S. television network PBS, whose website it defaced with a bogus story claiming that the late rapper Tupac Shakur had been discovered alive in New Zealand.

An offshoot of the loose-knit movement known as Anonymous, LulzSec and its reputed leader, known as Sabu, had some of the highest profiles in the movement. But last year U.S. officials unmasked Sabu as FBI informant Hector Xavier Monsegur and officials on both sides of the Atlantic swooped in on his alleged collaborators, making roughly half a dozen arrests.

Anonymous Hits Israel with a Massive Cyber Attack, Israel Attacks Back

To ring in this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day, the classy hackers at Anonymous took down a bunch of Israeli government websites on Sunday and say they caused over $3 billion in damage. But they didn’t totally get away with it. Within a few hours of the attack which Anonymous says affected 100,000 websites, 40,000 Facebook pages, 5,000 Twitter accounts and 30,000 bank accounts, an Israeli hacker broke into the website that Anonymous had set up for the attack, dubbed Operation Israel. Instead of the original anti-Israel messages that were originally on the site to protest Israel’s treatment of Palestine, the Israeli hacker rejiggered the site to play "Hatikvah," Israel’s national anthem.

Israel’s playing this one super cool. Despite Anonymous’s claims of massive damage, the country’s cyber security officials say that the attack caused minimal damage. "So far it is as was expected, there is hardly any real damage," Yitzhak Ben Yisrael from the government’s National Cyber Bureau told the press. "Anonymous doesn’t have the skills to damage the country’s vital infrastructure. And if that was its intention, then it wouldn’t have announced the attack ahead of time. It wants to create noise in the media about issues that are close to its heart." This is more or less what Anonymous always does, often with varying levels of success.

Regardless of the amount of damage done, the scale of the attack is bound to be embarrassing for the Israeli government. This is the second time that Anonymous has successfully taken down Israeli government websites. The original #OpIsrael attack happened last November and affected some 600 sites and resulted in the hackers released personal information for thousands of high-ranking officials. Israel denied then that the attack

did any damage, and some tech writers balked at the effort, saying that Anonymous had lost its swagger.

If that was the case then, Anonymous just looks insensitive now. The Holocaust and any holiday commemorating it is hardly a topic to goof around about. And given Israel’s allege involvement in the infamous Stuxnet cyber attack, it’s hard to believe a bunch of zany hackers with a bad DDoSing habit could really stand up to their security teams. They didn’t either.

NYC Students, Hackers Train for Cybersecurity Jobs

Every week, a group of teenagers and 20-somethings dressed in hoodies gets together in a tiny room on a college campus and plug in their laptops. They turn up pulsing electronic funk music, order pizza and begin furiously hacking into computer networks.

But they’re not shadowy criminals: They’re students training to become "white-hat" hackers, experts to help business and government agencies protect their data from cyberattacks that have become an almost daily occurrence.

"It’s the new espionage. Spies operate from behind keyboards now," says Evan Jensen, a senior at the Polytechnic Institute of New York University and one of the leaders of the Hack Night events where about two dozen students hone their hacking skills.

Since actual hacking is illegal, the students can’t just sneak into a webpage and poke around for learning’s sake. So industry experts, professors and the school’s very own "Hacker In Residence," Dan Guido, collaborate to create exercises that expose the students to real-world hacking scenarios.

Guido, who runs his own cybersecurity firm, will walk students through one of the most common means hackers use to gain access to a computer network attacks on the software of a browser like Internet Explorer. In June 2011, Google said it had traced to China a cyberattack that attempted to access hundreds of Google email accounts.

Guido uses the case, much of which has been made public, to recreate the exploit, having students map out step by step how the hacker was able to access a desktop computer and infiltrate the company’s network.

While bigger schools such as Georgia Tech, Purdue and Carnegie Mellon are known for their cybersecurity programs, experts say Brooklyn-based NYU-Poly is now considered among the best schools for training students with hands on, mission-critical cybersecurity skills. That’s due in part to Hack Night, an active cybersecurity club and an annual hacking competition each fall that the school bills as the largest in the country.

"Every one of the faculty, every one of the undergraduates and every one of the graduate students is engaged in real-world exercises," says Alan Paller, director of the SANS Institute, a cybersecurity training organization. "They come out having actually developed and tested their skills."

Paller says the need for cybersecurity experts with real world training is

severe a 2012 report he co-authored found that the Department of Homeland Security alone needs 600 such experts. Last month, the Defense Department announced it is establishing a series of cyber teams charged with carrying out offensive operations to combat threats of cyberattacks aimed at disrupting the country’s vital infrastructure.

And just this week, the House Intelligence Committee voted in favor of a bill proposing a new data-sharing program that would give the federal government a broader role in helping banks, manufacturers and other businesses protect themselves against cyberattacks.

"The only defense against these things are skills," Paller says. "We have too many people in the cybersecurity field that don’t have the hands-on skills. We call them frequent fliers. We don’t have enough pilots."

In the last few years, some companies have staged "bug bounty" programs, paying cash or other prizes to cybersecurity researchers in controlled situations who are able to breach their systems and expose flaws in their software. Though they haven’t yet won a major cash prize, NYU-Poly students are currently participating in "bug bounty" programs for companies like eBay, PayPal, Google Chrome and Samsung. A few months ago, one student received a bag full of random gifts such as T-shirts, a board game and a handwritten note after he identified a security flaw in the software of online merchandise seller Woot.com.

NYU-Poly professor Nasir Memon, director of the Information Systems and Internet Security laboratory, says the goal is to teach aggressive tactics beyond the classroom, while staying inside the boundaries of the law.

"Becoming good at security involves doing these challenges, exercises that put you in the context even if it’s artificial and made up," he says. "There’s something in front of you that you have to overcome and reach your goal very much like athletes or military soldiers."

Memon says he hasn’t yet had a student get busted for hacking illegally but every time the FBI calls to recruit a student his heart skips a beat.

"We try and create that culture of no messing around. If we find they’ve done anything we throw them out of the lab," says Memon, adding that he knows of no students who have crossed the line.

Many of the 270 NYU-Poly cybersecurity students are already starting to line up jobs earning lucrative salaries at private cybersecurity consulting firms or big banks in need of people able to identify and correct vulnerabilities in their networks.

Others, especially those with graduate degrees, will go on to careers in law enforcement working for the National Security Administration, the Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies in need of hackers with special computer skills, such as advanced programming and digital forensics.

Because they are in such demand, cybersecurity students can pick and choose where they want to work.

"You see all the time a lot of job descriptions for people who are trying to hire guys like us say things like, business casual is not acceptable here," says Julian Cohen, 22, a senior and a founder of the weekly Wednesday evening Hack Night. "No one wants to go to work in a button-down

shirt and slacks."

US Team Using Twitter, Facebook To Fight Militants

The U.S. official who oversees American efforts to counter al-Qaida and other militants in the online battlefield keeps a quote on his desk from a "Most Wanted" jihadi from America's South. The Alabama native wrote that "the war of narratives has become even more important than the war of navies, napalm and knives."

"I keep that on my desk because that is true," Alberto Fernandez, the top official at the State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, told The Associated Press. "It doesn't mean I think he's a great thinker or anything. I just thought that was right."

The wanted fighter behind the quote is Omar Hammami, who joined the Somali militant group al-Shabab about seven years ago and is a prolific user of Twitter, where he nostalgically posts about America like the U.S. children's television show Reading Rainbow or his grandmother's cooking as well as analyses of al-Shabab's battlefield strategy.

Fernandez' Digital Outreach Team has had online exchanges with Hammami in Arabic, though Fernandez says that while Hammami is engaging, silly and flippant in English, his Arabic is "staged and formal, as if someone is doing it for him."

One example of that flippancy: After the U.S. recently announced a $5 million reward for Hammami he responded on Twitter: "As I'm a bit low on cash, how much is my left leg going for?"

Hammami, Fernandez says, has responded to the U.S. online efforts "in superficial ways ... he hasn't engaged in a substantive way."

"We are focused on specifics on al-Qaida/al-Shabab actions in Somalia, their violence and brutality against the Somali people, the disconnect between their words and their actions," Fernandez said in a telephone interview from Washington. "A week ago they beheaded an 80-year-old Somali imam for disagreeing with them."

The Digital Outreach Team tweets, posts updates on Facebook and uploads video to YouTube in Arabic, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu. The 50-member team is comprised of Americans and foreign nationals who are native speakers of the four languages. The unit had more than 7,000 what it terms "engagements" postings, updates or uploads in 2012, its second full year in operation.

For example, on Wednesday the Digital Outreach Team said on its Arabic Facebook page that Jabhat al-Nusra, one of the most powerful Islamic militant groups fighting alongside Syrian rebels against the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad, is not in Syria "to support the revolution and the Syrian people, but to impose al-Qaida's political agenda."

Foreign fighters once mostly confined their online conversations to militant chat rooms and forums, but they have been migrating to more public Internet platforms in recent years, Fernandez said.

"The goal is to contest space that had previously been ceded to

extremists, to confront them, to expose the bankruptcy and contradictions, the incoherence of al-Qaida, their friends and allies," said the Arabic-speaking Fernandez. "Previously they could monopolize, they could post their lies and no one was there to challenge them. And now we're there to challenge them on whatever platform they're at."

Terrorism expert J.M. Berger said Fernandez's group faces challenges.

Tens of thousands of social media users with an interest in violent ideologies can be identified, Berger, who published a paper last month about countering violent extremism on social networks for the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, told AP in an email. But it's "very difficult to figure out which users are worth watching. For students of extremist movements and those working to counter violent extremism online, deciphering the signal amid the noise can prove incredibly daunting."

Berger said he has a high opinion of the work of Fernandez' team, which is working in an online environment that is both new to the government and fraught with pitfalls.

"There's a massive amount of work needed to develop the expertise to back such efforts up. Because it's Twitter, you don't think of it as requiring a lot of knowledge to wade on in, but these guys need all kinds of linguistic, regional and subject matter expertise," Berger said.

The Digital Outreach Team briefs Congress, think tanks and "others in government," Fernandez said.

Hammami says he is unimpressed with Fernandez's team.

He regularly chats online with a group of American terrorism experts and, in a tweet last month, said: "so far the digital outreach is quite lame. I think being in arabic hides that fact from you guys."

Hammami's online exchanges are so colloquial and so infused with Americana that many in the counter-terror field have formed a type of digital bond with Hammami. Fernandez even says: "I feel pity for him."

"I feel like he's one of those young men whose life has been ruined by getting into crimes or drugs and it turns out to be far different than he expected and they can't get out," Fernandez said.

Devastating PC Decline Is Literally Incomprehensible to Industry Experts

Despite ill omens, the IDC report about PC volume decline hitting -14% in the first quarter shows once again how much trouble the tech industry is having when it comes to dealing with the ongoing computer meltdown. As I wrote last December, IDC has been completely out to lunch about this key trend for years. In March of 2012, IDC was still expecting desktop and laptop sales to take off in the second half of 2012. Last December, IDC cheerfully predicted 1.2% growth in computer sales between 2012 and 2016. Of course, the PC industry is tucking into a majestic swan dive that makes those projections downright surreal. How can one of the most respected research firms in the computer sector be so disconnected from reality? The answer is simple: Analysts from largest research firms simply aren t allowed to call major turning points.

The clients of these research outfits include the largest computer hardware and software companies in the world. Predicting a steep downturn that does not materialize is far more dangerous than closing your eyes and looking away from the imminent collapse. So analysts seem to play it safe and deliberately ignore the most negative scenarios.

The same exact pattern happened before the epic mobile handset downturn of 2001-2002 and the nasty consumer electronics recession of 2008-2009. Big research firms simply aren t in the business of calling big cycle turns; their core business is holding the hands of major hardware vendors and making mostly soothing noises.

The downside of this is that those companies who actually believe in the forecasts of IDC and its ilk can get their product road map planning disastrously wrong. It is now becoming clear that all laptop and netbook vendors should have started planning a very aggressive shift towards other product categories for 2013.

Fairly soon, we will discover which ones have their escape plans plotted out and which ones will be caught in the smoldering ruins of the PC industry.

Friendships Cut Short on Social Media as People Get Ruder

Rudeness and throwing insults are cutting online friendships short with a survey on Wednesday showing people are getting ruder on social media and two in five users have ended contact after a virtual altercation.

As social media usage surges, the survey found so has incivility with 78 percent of 2,698 people reporting an increase in rudeness online with people having no qualms about being less polite virtually than in person.

One in five people have reduced their face-to-face contact with someone they know in real life after an online run-in.

Joseph Grenny, co-chairman of corporate training firm VitalSmarts that conducted the survey, said online rows now often spill into real life with 19 percent of people blocking, unsubscribing or "unfriending" someone over a virtual argument.

"The world has changed and a significant proportion of relationships happen online but manners haven’t caught up with technology," Grenny told Reuters on the release of the online survey conducted over three weeks in February.

"What really is surprising is that so many people disapprove of this behavior but people are still doing it. Why would you name call online but never to that person’s face?"

Figures from the Pew Research Center show that 67 percent of online adults in the United States now use social networking sites with Facebook the most popular while the latest figures show over half of the British population has Facebook accounts.

The survey follows a spate of highly publicized run-ins between people who came to virtual blows online.

British football player Joey Barton, who plays for Olympique de Marseille, was summoned by the French soccer federation’s ethics committee after calling Paris St Germain’s defender Thiago Silva an "overweight ladyboy" on Twitter.

Boxer Curtis Woodhouse was widely praised after he tracked down a tweeter who branded him a "complete disgrace" and "joke" after a loss, going to his tormenter’s house for an apology.

Grenny said survey respondents had their own stories such as a family not talking for two years after an online row when one man posted an embarrassing photo of his sister and refused to remove it, instead blasting it to all his contacts.

Workplace tensions are also often tracked back to conversations in chat forums when workers talked negatively about another colleague.

"People seem aware that these kinds of crucial conversations should not take place on social media yet there seems to be a compulsion to resolve emotions right now and via the convenience of these channels," said Grenny.

Grenny suggested peer-to-peer pressure was needed to enforce appropriate behavior online with people told if out of line.

He said three rules that could improve conversations online were to avoid monologues, replace lazy, judgmental words, and cut personal attacks particularly when emotions were high.

"When reading a response to your post and you feel the conversation is getting too emotional for an online exchange, you’re right! Stop. Take it offline. Or better yet, face-to-face," he said.

Teens’ ’Like’ for Facebook on Decline

Several years ago, Facebook became the new MySpace when it rose to where it is now: the top social networking site. But results of a survey measuring teenage interest in social networks indicates that now Facebook might have to be the one to figure out how to stay cool with the younger crowd.

The new research from Piper Jaffray, which focuses on the teen market, reports that 33 percent of 5,200 teens surveyed listed Facebook as their most important social network. Though that number is still good enough to make Facebook number one in the survey, the site has dropped 9 percentage points since the fall 2012 report, in which 42 percent of teens rated it their most important social network.

Twitter was ranked second, with 30 percent of teens saying it’s their most important social tool. Instagram and Tumblr received 17 and 4 percent of the vote, respectively. Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr also each enjoyed increases over fall 2012. The bright spot for Facebook may be that Instagram, which the company purchased for $1 billion last year, showed a 5 percent jump - the largest increase of all the social networks.

Besides Facebook, the only other service to show a decrease in interest

was Google+, which was down to 5 percent from 6 percent in Fall 2012. Pinterest was unchanged at 2 percent.

Though Twitter is a close second behind Facebook in this survey, teen interest seems to be splintering among a number of other services. A recent Reuters report found that many teens are using messaging services like Kik and Snapchat in lieu of Facebook.

One teen told Reuters that using Kik is faster when sharing things like YouTube clips. "It’s easy. You can flip in and out of Kik."

Piper Jaffray listed Kik and Spapchat in the top five "write-in" answers teens gave for social media sites.

Other social networks on the horizon like Pheed are also gaining steam with the younger set for reasons beyond just convenience. Part of the draw of Pheed has been the service’s copyright system, which allows content creators to watermark the photos and videos they share on the social network. Younger users also go on other networks like Pheed to create smaller, clicker social networks. Pheed told ABC News that 84 percent of its users were between the ages of 15 and 24. In February, Pheed’s iOS app was the number one free social networking app in Apple’s App Store.

There is a bit more bad news for Facebook in Piper Jaffray’s report. Numbers show that teens prefer iOS or the iPhone or the iPad over Android phones or tablets. In the "What O/S Is Likely To Be On Your Next Phone?" category, 59 percent of teens said iOS and only 21 percent said Android.

Android is, of course, the operating system that runs Facebook’s new "Home" software, the immersive Facebook experience that features full screen Cover Feed photos and a new pop-up messaging feature called Chat Heads.

So is it time for Facebook to panic? It looks like the company is already aware of the challenge.

In the company’s public 10-K annual report with the Securities and Exchanges Committee this February, Facebook included this statement: "We believe that some of our users, particularly our younger users, are aware of and actively engaging with other products and services similar to, or as a substitute for, Facebook."

"For example, we believe that some of our users have reduced their engagement with Facebook in favor of increased engagement with other products and services such as Instagram," the company wrote. "In the event that our users increasingly engage with other products and services, we may experience a decline in user engagement and our business could be harmed."

However, CEO of Facebook Mark Zuckerberg, isn’t worried about that right now. When asked at last week’s Facebook "Home" launch about the reports of the declining teen demographic, he said, "The engagement we see is good and we are quite happy with it."

Microsoft: No More Support for You, Office for Mac 2008

Microsoft has reminded customers running Office for Mac 2008 that support for the suite ends next Tuesday.

Support for Office for Mac 2008 will end April 9, 2013, Microsoft s Mac Business Unit, the firm s OS X development arm, said in a post on the team s blog Thursday.

According to the company s support lifecycle site, all versions of the 2008 suite will be retired next week. Office for Mac 2008 launched Jan. 15, 2008, or about five years and three months ago.

The MacBU s note was yet another reminder that Microsoft shortchanges customers running OS X. Microsoft supports the Windows versions of Office, even those that target consumers, for 10 years, or twice as long as it does Office for the Mac.

Office Home and Student 2007, for example, which launched in late January 2007, a full year before Office for Mac 2008 appeared, will be supported until October 2017, more than four years from now. The older Office Student and Teacher 2003 retires down the road, too, in April 2014, alongside Windows XP.

Even the Mac suite that s clearly business-oriented, Office 2008 for Mac Business Edition, loses support in a few days.

Office for Mac 2008 will not suddenly stop working next week; it will launch, and let users create, edit and print documents. But it will not be served with security updates after April 8.

For some reason, Microsoft considers all editions of Office for Windows as business products, no matter that some like Home and Student cannot be used for commercial purposes. At the same time it categorizes all editions of Office on OS X as consumer products.

That s clear from Microsoft s policies. On its support lifecycle FAQ, Microsoft explains support for business and consumer software.

Microsoft will offer a minimum of 10 years of support for Business and Developer products, the company says. For consumer software, meanwhile, it states: Microsoft will offer Mainstream Support for either a minimum of 5 years from the date of a product s general availability, or for 2 years after the successor product (N+1) is released, whichever is longer.

The speedy retirement of Office for Mac 2008 is not new: Users faced the same five-year support lifespan for Office for Mac 2004, which was shut down in January 2012.

Admittedly, that was more over two years later than the original deadline. But Microsoft s last-minute reprieve of Office for Mac 2004 was a one-time deal, as the MacBU made plain at the time. This extension does not change the five-year support policy for other Office for Mac products, including future versions, a senior product manager said then.

Microsoft extended support for Office for Mac 2004 to allow its users, many of whom relied on Visual Basic-based macros, time to migrate to the impending Office for Mac 2011, which launched in October 2010. Office for Mac 2008 dropped support for Visual Basic macros, but that support was restored in Office for Mac 2011.

Thursday, MacBU recommended that customers running Office for Mac 2004

migrate to Office 365, the line of subscription plans that lets users install Office for Mac Home & Business 2011 on up to five Macs. The consumer subscription plan, Office 365 Home Premium, costs $100 per year.

They can also opt for a perpetual license of Office for Mac 2011, the traditional kind that is paid for once, but can be used as long as wanted. Office for Mac Home and Student lists for $140, while the for-commercial-use Home and Business sells for $220.

Customers, however, have less than three more years before Office for Mac 2011 falls off Microsoft s support list in January 2016.

Decide What Happens to Your Account After You Die

What happens to your e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and other digital accounts after you die has long been a question in the tech world. Some have even started to create a digital estates to pass on the keys to their digital lives to an executor or trustee.

But Google is now thinking ahead and making it easier for people to plan what happens to that digital data after you pass. The company has announced its Inactive Account Manager.

The tool allows users to decide what happens to their data on Google’s services - Gmail, Blogger, Google Drive, Google+, Picasa Web Albums, Google Voice and YouTube - after they pass. You can decide to share access to those accounts with friends or family members or have the account deleted.

"You can tell us what to do with your Gmail messages and data from several other Google services if your account becomes inactive for any reason," Andreas Tuerk, the product manager of the service, wrote on Google’s blog today.

Instead of someone informing Google of your death, the service uses inactivity as a barometer. You set the time of inactivity - three, six, nine or 12 months - and if you don’t log into your account after that period Google will do one of two things. You can have it alert up to 10 trusted friends or contacts and choose to share your data with them or you can also just have it set to delete your entire account.

Before the systems take any of those actions though, it will warn you via a text message or an email to a secondary address. Of course, if you have died you won’t get that alert and it will then take action.

It might sound like a somber tool, but Google is now making it easier than many other services when it comes to planning for your death in the digital domain.

New Hampshire State Rep. Peter Sullivan introduced legislation in February to allow the executor of an estate control over the social networking pages of the dead. Five other states, including Oklahoma, Idaho, Rhode Island, Indiana and Connecticut, have established legislation regulating one’s digital presence after death. Rhode Island and Connecticut were first, but their bills were limited to email accounts, excluding social networking sites. With other services, such as iTunes, some have started to set up digital trusts.

Beyond ownership, many services have popped up over the last couple of months that address the issue of sending messages via social media services after death. A Facebook app called "Ifidie" lets you set up a way to send out Facebook messages to friends after you pass.

You identify a trustee who will confirm that you have died, and the messages will be sent. _LivesOn is a Twitter service that will analyze your tweets, allow you to train it, and will tweet for you after you are gone.

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